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The BERA Conference 2014

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Research Tittle

An investigation of the experiences of newly graduated English Language Teachers (ELT) in their first years in Libyan schools: a case study in post-conflict Tripoli

This study is qualitative, multiple case studies aim to investigate the experiences, perspectives and challenges of a group of newly graduated teachers of English as a foreign language in post- conflict Tripoli Libya. It also aims at understanding the relationship between teacher education programmes and NGTs' early classroom experiences in formulating those experiences.

In literature, researchers as Veenman (1984), Farrell (2008 a, 2008b, 2006) and Urmston& Pennington (2008) studied beginner teachers' experiences which varied from reality hock, role conflict to isolation and lack of knowledge required for effective teaching. Others such as Richards and Pennington (1998) and Tarone and Allwright (2005) have revealed a gap between the academic course contents in language teacher preparation programmes and the real obstacles that beginner teachers face in the language classroom in their first years. However, it was noticeable that is a paucity of research about beginners/newly graduated experiences in post-conflict context. Therefore, the study is designed with a view to answer the following research questions:

RQ1-What are newly graduated EFL teachers' perceptions of their experiences during their first years of teaching in post-conflict Libya?

RQ2-How are EFL newly graduated teachers prepared for their teaching practice? What type of preparation is it? Who offers it if there is any? I f it is available, who offers it?

RQ3- How do those teachers perceive the development of their knowledge, and identities as teachers of English?

The sample is a purposive included 11NGTs, 2 experienced teachers (expert), 4 inspectors, 3 head teachers and the manager of The Education Development

Centre. The main methods of data generation were semi structured interview, focus group interviews, observation and documentary. Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998) was the conceptual framework adopted and by operationalization of the main feature of CoP mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire, this allowed me to deeply understand those teachers' perceptions in a post-conflict situation. This presentation deals with the main findings of my first research question which revealed that the conflict with its trilogy; the political, the social restriction and the personal sides worked together and precluded the existence of CoP. The participants did not experience the richness of the conceptualization of CoP to learn and develop themselves as qualified teachers. The impact of the conflict was apparent, manifested in schism on the level of the society and teachers represent part of the society. Schism was transferred to schools. Teachers were divided into groups according to their loyalties. There was diversity of loyalty to (tribe/group/ideology) Reserve could be noticed everywhere. It seemed that everyone had suspicion among people even within the same family and the subsequent rift was brought to schools which precluded the formation of CoP. What happened in schools mirrored the situation of the entire society. The conflict also exacerbated age barrier and the social restriction of roles and values. This atmosphere was pervasive and this reserve caused many of the teachers I met reluctant to discuss political issues in the course of their daily interaction. Under the umbrella of respect, beginner teachers avoided contact with experienced teacher-colleagues such restriction on relationships does not promote the development mutual engagement. To the contrary, this widened the gap and led some teachers to resort to isolation which promoted marginalization. This view of the age barrier may have pushed teachers to resort to self-socialization (De Lima, 2003) and to isolate themselves from other members of the community. They might not be interested in integration.

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